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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, April 24, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Home Dyeing with Commercial Dyes." Information from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Last week, you may remember, I talked about getting your money's worth when you buy cotton goods, silks and rayons, and ready-made garments. I really thought that my words would be of interest to everybody who listened.

But not so. . . Just a few minutes after I'd finished the talk on buying fabrics, I had a call from a listener who said that my words were wasted, so far as she was concerned. She couldn't afford a single new dress, even for Easter. As for a new hat, she said nobody would "write a sonnet, to her Easter bonnet," because she didn't have an Easter bonnet.....

Well, I asked, what can I do for you?

Tell me how to redye old material, she said. My motto, she told me, when funds are low and I can't afford to buy new dresses -- my motto is: "Keep a stiff upper lip, and always say dye."

Not bad -- not bad at all. And if this listener has some material that's still good enough to redye, and make over into new spring dresses, then she must be a pretty good buyer when she does have the money.

Well, I promised to give her the latest facts from the Bureau of Home Economics, about home dying. These are the facts, quoted directly:

"It is always easier to dye a fabric a deeper shade of the same color, than to change to a new one. However, if you desire a different color, top dyeing, or dyeing a new color over the old one, offers many possibilities.

"To prepare garments for redyeing, remove all trimming, buttons, and buckles, and rip out hems, plaits, and linings so that the dye can penetrate evenly through the fabric. If the garment is to be remade, rip it up first and dye the pieces. Remove all spots and stains, and wash the material well in soap and water. Rinse thoroughly. Any soap left in the fabric causes difficulty in dyeing. Faded garments should have their color removed.

"The process of removing color from a fabric is called stripping. Stripping may be done by boiling in several soap solutions of soft water and good neutral soap. Different color removers are often used. Javelle water and hydrogen peroxide will remove some dyes, but Javelle water weakens silk and wool and must not be used on them. Many bleaches and dye stripping agents, sold on the market under various trade names, are also used for this purpose.

"The kettle for dyeing should be granite or agate ware, and must be large enough that the material to be dyed can be completely immersed and moved about freely. Plenty of water to cover the fabric is very important to insure good results. Soft water gives better penetration of the dye. Weigh the fabric before it is wet, and determine the amount of dye needed according to its weight. Dissolve the dye thoroughly in a little hot water, strain through a cloth into the dye bath, and stir well. Sticks of smooth wood, or glass towel rods are convenient for stirring.

"The proper temperature for dyeing depends on both the kind of dye-stuff and the fiber. As a rule, it is better to put fabrics in the dye bath at a low temperature, and then raise it gradually as the directions on the dye package state. Wool combines better with dyes at temperatures near the boiling point, but it will not stand hard boiling. Silk takes up dye rapidly, and to insure even dyeing, the dyebath should have a temperature of about 140° to 160° F. Wool and silk must never be left in the dye bath longer than the time stated in the directions.

"The direct cotton dyes give better penetration of color to cotton and linen in a boiling bath, although at lower temperatures they absorb more dye. For this reason, when dyeing dark colors allow cotton and linen to remain in the cooling dye bath for 10 to 15 minutes after removing from the fire. Cotton and wool mixtures should also be left in the dye bath until it cools down, or the cotton will be lighter in color than the wool."

Now, about rayons: Since many rayons are weaker when wet, they must be handled very carefully and the dye bath kept below boiling. Some rayons take the dye as readily as silk, while others need special treatment.

"Whatever material you are dyeing, wet it thoroughly, then quickly immerse it in the dye, and keep it in constant motion. All folds of the garment must be well opened out. Stir and turn so that no part floats on top of the dye bath or remains at the bottom. Spotting and uneven dyeing results if the garment is allowed to float. On the dye package are directions for the manipulation of the material, the addition of salt or other chemicals, and the time required for boiling different fabrics. Follow all such directions implicitly.

"Rinse the dyed material in several warm waters until the rinse water is clear, and finally in cool water. Use large quantities of water and, if possible, rinse in running water. Thorough rinsing, to remove all excess dye, prevents crocking. Wool materials must be rinsed in warm water and never placed directly from the hot dye bath into a cold rinse water. Sudden changes of temperature will felt and shrink wool. Dye and rinse waters must be extracted evenly by squeezing and never by wringing or twisting.

"If convenient, it is well to hang the dyed garment out-of-doors in the shade and when partially dry, to lay it full length on a Turkish towel, fold the towel lengthwise over it and roll it up. When dry enough to iron, the material should be pressed under a cloth on the wrong side. If impossible to press on the wrong side, cover with a smooth heavy cloth and press on the right side, but do not press until entirely dry or the fabric will have a shiny finish."

All these facts about home dyeing I've quoted from the textile experts of the Bureau of Home Economics, who are reliable authorities.

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